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September 21, 2019

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 127 (Wiener) Caltrans Complete Streets for Active Living – SIGN

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations and our respective members and volunteers across California, we submit this letter in **strong support** for SB 127 (Wiener) and ask that you **SIGN** this important measure. This bill will require the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to consider implementing complete streets elements – e.g. safer sidewalks, bikeways, and crosswalks – on a limited number of roads owned and managed by the department when they conduct routine maintenance. The roads that would be impacted by the bill constitute approximately 17% of the state highway system. Collectively, our organizations represent the leading voices in active transportation and public health in the state, and we are excited that this measure, which will make our roadways safer for all Californians, has made its way to you with strong legislative support.

As you know, Caltrans owns over 50,000 lane-miles of the state highway system, and maintains it with over \$4.2 billion annually through the State Highway Operation and Protection Program (SHOPP). Many miles of state-owned roadways function as surface streets in cities, towns and neighborhoods – e.g. Van Ness Boulevard in San Francisco – and carry local traffic, including people walking, bicycling, or waiting to catch a bus or light rail. For decades, Caltrans has prioritized moving car and truck traffic as quickly as possible on these roads and has failed to meaningfully engage with the very people who use these roads daily to ensure that basic safety features, like crosswalks, sidewalks and bike lanes, are incorporated into them where most needed and when most cost-effective. This reality has led to unnecessary road deaths and has contributed to increased congestion and air pollution.

More recently, Caltrans adopted its Strategic Management Plan 2015-2020 that includes goals to triple bicycling and double walking and transit trips by 2020 and developed an internal complete streets directive. Reaching these goals is critical to meeting the state's long-term environmental objectives. Despite these departmental policies, Caltrans has missed the opportunity to implement complete streets elements as part of routine road maintenance on

SHOPP projects, consistent with Federal Highway Administration guidance. SB 127 aims to change the default operating order at Caltrans and implement industry-developed best practices, by requiring:

1. The Transportation Asset Management Plan to include complete streets elements;
2. A limited number of Caltrans-identified state highway segments that serve as surface streets to include complete streets elements unless these improvements are not cost-effective, would not meet a practical future need, or would have costs to the state that exceed their benefits; and,
3. Caltrans to incorporate input from active transportation stakeholders in existing project implementation processes in order to account for safety priorities of vulnerable road users prior to finalizing the scope of a SHOPP project.

To us, the need for and benefits of robust complete streets implementation are clear. Walking and bicycling as modes of transportation have doubled between 2000 and 2012, constituting nearly 20% of trips in California per the National Household Travel Survey. Although walking and biking have increased, Caltrans has not created an adequate amount of new facilities to protect the growing population of people walking and bicycling. Moreover, recent research by Smart Growth America has shown that California ranks at #16 for pedestrian risk, with 7,127 pedestrian deaths between 2008 and 2017. Sadly, older adults, people of color and people walking in low-income communities are disproportionately represented in these deaths. Making Caltrans-owned streets in our neighborhoods safe environments for walking and bicycling will significantly reduce this high risk of traffic violence. With pedestrians and cyclists comprising over a quarter of all traffic fatalities in the state, we need Caltrans to do its part and to take action to make our streets safer for all road users.

Complete streets are a public health issue. Encouraging even more Californians to walk or bike – a necessary outcome for public health and the environment – requires that the state leverage its existing resources to get serious about improving the safety of our roadways. Studies have shown that more and better quality sidewalks are associated with higher rates of walking and more adults meeting the daily physical activity recommendations.

Complete streets also benefit local economies. In a study of 37 complete streets projects by Smart Growth America, “complete streets projects were related to broader economic gains like increased employment and higher property values.” What’s more, the safety improvements of complete streets can have financial benefits. The report found that complete streets saved \$18.1 million in collision and injury costs on those same projects in one year.

SB 127 is sound public policy. It also recognizes the need for equity in the creation of complete streets to address the disproportionate burden that low-income and disadvantaged communities face from unsafe streets and has provisions for community input on proposed projects. Low-income communities and communities of color often lack well-maintained routes to parks and schools, roads, bike lanes, and sidewalks, and these neighborhoods are often crisscrossed by busy, dangerous state roads. In many cases, residents in these communities simply do not have transportation options at all.

Complete streets make communities and neighborhoods more livable by ensuring all people can get safely to where they need to go – work, school, the library, grocery stores, or parks – with healthy, affordable options. They also help people feel more connected to their neighbors, which improves quality of life.

For these reasons we ask you to SIGN SB 127.

If you have any questions, please contact Linda Khamoushian, Senior Policy Advocate at linda@calbike.org or (916) 668-9401.

Sincerely,

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cc: The Honorable Scott Wiener, California State Senate
The Honorable Tasha Boerner Horvath, California State Assembly
The Honorable Laura Friedman, California State Assembly
The Honorable Richard Bloom, California State Assembly
The Honorable David Chiu, California State Assembly
The Honorable Eduardo Garcia, California State Assembly
The Honorable Lorena Gonzalez, California State Assembly
Ronda Paschal, Deputy Legislative Secretary, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom
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